

"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR."

ALL THE YEAR ROUND

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BROWNIE'S PLOT.

A SERIAL STORY.

By the Author of "Lucy Carter."

CHAPTER XIX. MAUD IS SUSPICIOUS.

DURING the first week or two of Clement's illness Maud scarcely left his side, and all this time Mrs. Oliver was constantly at hand to assist her.

The constraint which had lately kept the brother and sister apart was now broken down for ever. Under the influence of her sympathy for his suffering, she was more than half inclined to hold him innocent of the crime: putting resolutely from her mind all the evidence which had formerly served to convict him.

Clement's injuries were chiefly external; and there was every reason to hope that his excellent constitution would safely tide over the crisis. At last he was pronounced out of danger.

Brownie came daily to enquire after her cousin; and that was indeed a happy hour when she was once more allowed to see him. But, before Anderson gave this permission, he exacted a promise that, in consideration of Clement's still weak condition, she would make no reference, direct or indirect, to the matter of the forgery.

"You see, Brownie," said Clement, with the ghost of his former smile, "the powers were fighting on your side. I was not to leave Middleton, after all. That is to say, unless I had taken a longer journey than either of us contemplated, and one for which they don't issue return tickets."

"Thank Heaven, we have been spared that, Clement!"

"Yes," he answered, resting his thin

hand on hers for a moment, "I am thankful, Brownie. I am thankful now, although, on that morning, I would as soon have gone out of the world as not. But now I feel that I should like to do some good in the world before I leave it—I have done nothing but mischief yet. Sometimes, Brownie, I wish I might make a clean breast of everything, and start anew. Do you know whom I should choose for my confessor? Can you guess, Brownie? Maud has been awfully good to me; Mrs. Oliver, too. But, don't you think Maud ought to be going home again? Mother must miss her. You might take her place; I only want some one to sit with me; I can dispense with a nurse."

He did not say all this straight away, but paused often for rest, whilst Brownie, conscientiously determined to keep her promise, was afraid to interpose many words, lest she should be tempted to break it. But she would smooth his pillow, bring nearer the flowers, or fetch his cooling beverage, performing numerous little acts to minister to his happiness, without trenching on the forbidden topic.

"I am sure that neither Maud nor auntie would consent to that," she answered.

He was easily excited, quickly demanding why she could not change places with Maud, adding, irritably:

"If you can't exist without seeing Litton, you can be easily gratified. He never misses a day. It is the last favour I shall ever ask you, Brownie."

As he lay there so helpless, his mind was ever bent about the future. Anxious, now, beyond measure, to have done with his old life, he looked longingly forward to the time when he might commence a new one. As soon as his limbs would

support him, he intended to shake the dust of Middleton from his feet. But his limbs were not yet to be relied upon, and he saw no reason why he should not enjoy as much of Brownie's society as possible.

He had no intention of declaring his hopeless love; that was to go with him, unspoken, to be his lifelong companion; all he thought of was present satisfaction, and this was marred by Brownie's reiterated, unqualified refusal to change places with Maud.

When Mrs. Oliver came upon duty, after Brownie's departure, she found her patient considerably worse than he had been before his cousin's arrival, and at once set herself to revive his spirits, as the surest method of increasing his strength. And when Maud entered the room, an hour later, it occurred to her sisterly mind that it would be well for Clement to have a change of air as soon as possible.

She made the suggestion to Anderson when he called the following day.

"You need not be uneasy," he assured her. "Mrs. Oliver, not without some reason, looks upon herself as, to a certain extent, the cause of your brother's accident. She is anxious to do all she can to make amends, and Clement must stay where he is for the present."

It was only natural that Maud's previous acquaintance with Anderson should have ripened into a more or less intimate friendship during these last few weeks. One thing might have been predicted with certainty; the doctor was not likely to hazard his patient's safety by too early a removal from his present quarters.

"I hoped we might have brought him to Eastwood," she persisted; "my mother has given her consent——"

"But you are hardly likely to obtain your brother's. No, no; you must not think of moving him yet. His life is the more valuable now, since he owes it to your care."

"As for me," she said, looking very pleased nevertheless, "I am a mere dummy nurse. Mrs. Oliver is the real Simon Pure."

"Yet you are so anxious to desert her."

While he spoke, Mrs. Oliver's rippling laugh broke upon his ears, and perhaps something that he saw on Maud's face led him to continue:

"I can guess your reason for wishing to remove Clement. You are afraid lest Mrs. Oliver's labour should prove, too truly, a labour of love. But, surely—I am re-

garding Clement only, not Mrs. Oliver herself—surely he is armed, at least, against any temptation of that kind."

"I am not sure," said Maud, embarrassed by the turn the conversation was taking.

"I am perfectly sure. I don't desire to underrate Mrs. Oliver's charms; but consider a moment. Compare her with your cousin Margaret, for instance."

"I don't think any one is to be compared with Brownie, Mr. Anderson. Especially——"

"Especially to you," she had been on the point of saying, when, remembering herself, she stopped just in time.

"Miss Northcott," he continued, "your cousin is very often in my thoughts. You know that we share a secret—Margaret and I. I am not at liberty even to hint at its nature. I wish I were; but I have endeavoured to persuade her to bring the mystery to an end; and she assures me that, in a very few days now, it shall be all over and done with."

"I am very glad," she answered; but yet her face betrayed no pleasure. "A straightforward course is always the best; don't you think so?"

"No doubt; who can think otherwise, Miss Northcott?" he said, looking at her with astonishment. "Well, I am due at the hospital. I shall have another look at our patient this evening."

The day which Brownie had so long and so ardently looked forward to was, indeed, drawing near. Everything had worked successfully towards her end. Even the invitations for her party had been sent out, and all those, whose presence she desired to witness Clement's victory, had promised to come.

So great was her confidence that, if Mr. Litton had made a full and free confession, she would have been almost disappointed. For, if it were good that Clement's innocence should be proved, it were still better that she should be the one to prove it.

And yet, properly speaking, she had no proof whatever. She had a theory which sounded plausible enough; but of actual proof she had none.

All her petty unpleasantnesses were soon to come to an end. The secret interviews with Mr. Litton were surely numbered. Not much longer would it be necessary to hold a candle to that personage, whose surroundings render so poor a flame contemptible. A little while, she told herself,

and she would once more be happy and light-hearted as of old.

Other words also, she told herself—told herself when she was quite alone, whispering them even then, and blushing at her own effrontery.

It was a consolation to Brownie that she had bound herself to pay that eight hundred and forty pounds to Mr. Litton. She looked upon it as a set off against the mischief she was so confident of doing to him.

Brownie determined to set her house in order before beginning a new and so important year of her life. Instead of waiting until the fresh month had commenced, therefore, she despatched the page for her banker's pass-book on the twenty-eighth of October.

In due course the boy returned with a large, thick, white envelope, properly sealed and directed to "Miss M. Northcott."

Sitting at her writing-table, Brownie opened the envelope and heedlessly took therefrom the pass-book and a bundle of cancelled cheques much larger than she had anticipated. Looking more closely at these, she perceived that the uppermost one was in Maud's handwriting, and drawn for the astounding sum of five thousand pounds. It was payable to Mr. Vaile; but why should Maud require to pay five thousand pounds to Mr. Vaile?—more especially as, in the ordinary course of things, she would not have had any such sum at the bank, without having first procured it by the lawyer's assistance. Upon investigating further, Brownie discovered that it was Maud's pass-book which had been sent in the place of her own.

She had received hers on the third of October, only a few weeks ago; whereas Maud, probably, had not troubled the bank for as many months; this fact, and some possible confusion on the part of the youthful messenger, seemed sufficient to account for the blunder.

But why should Maud have paid Mr. Vaile five thousand pounds? As Brownie sat wondering how to act—whether to tell Maud of the mistake, or, returning the book and cheques to the bank, to pass it over in silence, a new light broke upon her.

"Dear Maudie!" she exclaimed; and bundling the papers into the envelope again, she went to join Mrs. Northcott.

"Where is Uncle Walter?" she enquired, as the bell rang for luncheon.

"Why do you ask me, Margaret? Your

uncle does not condescend to keep me informed of his movements. It used to be quite different. He says he must go to London the day after to-morrow—that will be the thirtieth; and he always stays a week. Why should he want to go to London so often? I am quite positive of one thing—he will never be back by the fifth. Then all my pleasure will be spoilt. Not that that is anything new."

But Brownie was certain he would return in time; if the success of her scheme depended only upon Mr. Litton's presence, she would have been quite confident. Until the last day or two, indeed, she had been quite confident. Now, however, that she could count the very days to the time which was to decide Clement's fate, she could not put aside her anxiety; it was as much as she was able to do to disguise it. More than Mr. Litton's mere presence was needed; and, in consequence, her cheeks were growing pale and losing their curves, she looked worn and tired—not from doubt, but from sheer anxiety.

CHAPTER XX. CROSS PURPOSES.

THAT afternoon, Clement was to leave his room for the first time since his accident. A few days, and Anderson had promised that he should bid farewell to the Nook.

But Maud had been unable to induce her brother to return to Eastwood. Of course, he remembered all that Brownie had said about proving his innocence, and also that the day upon which she had fixed for the tableau was close at hand. Even while he had listened to her assurances of success, he had built not a single hope upon her words, and now he scarcely bestowed more than a passing thought upon the subject which occupied all her waking moments.

The days that had been so wearisome to Clement in his imprisonment, had been far from unhappy to Maud, who had ingratiated herself with every inmate of Mrs. Oliver's house; always excepting her husband, who, however, may scarcely be so described. His visits were few and far between, but resembled those of an angel in no other particular.

"Anderson promised to come early to-day," said Clement, as he sat in an easy-chair in Mrs. Oliver's dining-room.

A bright fire was burning in the grate, and Maud had endeavoured to make some

slight return for the kindness of her hostess, by providing sundry feminine nicknacks for the embellishment of the apartment, which had thus lost much of its bare appearance, and now looked cosy and home-like enough.

"It will be almost the Doctor's last visit," answered Mrs. Oliver. "So you really intend all to desert me at once!" she added, looking at Clement, and indulging in a sigh, which, if it began in jest, assuredly ended in earnest.

For she looked forward to the coming separation with unfeigned regret. These three had got along so well together. The past few weeks had been as a brief breathing-space to Mrs. Oliver, an interval in the misery of her ordinary existence. Whilst she was beginning to love Maud as a dear sister, she knew very well that when once she had taken her departure, the relationship must be broken.

"I am sure you will be pleased to see our backs," said Maud; "now that Clement has shaved off that horrid beard, he looks almost like himself again."

Hearing Anderson's footsteps on the path, Clement went to his bed-room, and, after visiting his patient, the Doctor found Maud alone.

"You must be thankful that your journeys here are drawing to an end," she said, as Anderson sat down with the air of a man to whom time was of no importance whatever.

"Why should I be thankful, Miss Northcott?"

Before she could answer, the door opened to admit a servant bearing a letter; the same large, thick, white envelope which Brownie had received that morning from the bank, and which she had redirected to "Miss Northcott" at the Nook.

"Pray excuse me, Mr. Anderson," she said; and, as the servant left the room, she broke the seal of the packet. "I wonder what it can be! It looks like a valentine, only it is hardly the time of year."

With a happy laugh, she peeped into the recesses of the envelope.

"Why ever did Brownie send this to me here!" she exclaimed, and turning the envelope upside down, she emptied its contents on her knees: bank-book, cheques, and letter of explanation.

While she was reading this, an expression of alarm gradually overshadowing her face, the cheques still lay in a small heap on her knees.

"I must wish you good afternoon," said Anderson, rising very abruptly, notwithstanding that he had seemed only a few minutes ago to have an unlimited amount of time at his disposal.

She looked quickly from her letter to his face, the expression of alarm still visible on her own.

"I have advised your brother to remain here until the first of November; that will be next Monday. After that, I do not see the slightest reason for continuing to treat him as an invalid. He can quite well dispense with my services. I am not certain whether he understood—whether I made this plain to him. Perhaps you would be kind enough to mention it."

Maud had taken in the contents of the letter at a glance, and whilst he spoke was busily, and with shaking hands, trying to collect the scattered cheques. Uppermost lay that one to which Brownie's letter referred; and as Maud tried to shuffle it to a less noticeable position, her nervous fingers caught its sides, pushing it so prominently forward that Anderson could hardly avoid reading it now, even if it had escaped his notice before. He made no attempt to assist her, standing looking at her awkward movements until at last she safely collected the cheques in one hand, while the pass-book occupied the other.

"I am sure that Clement—that we all owe you a big debt of gratitude," she said, glad to utter any commonplace to relieve the awkward silence; but he walked towards the door without replying.

Maud had no true reason to be ashamed of anything she had done; but she saw that there was one point of view—which the perversity of fate would very likely cause to be seized upon—from which her conduct must appear at the least unbecoming.

Perhaps, she told herself, as she followed Anderson along the hall of Mrs. Oliver's little house, perhaps, after all, Anderson had not seen the cheque; and more than once she was on the point of speaking to him candidly, but she hesitated, and so her opportunity was lost. A few days, and how bitterly she regretted that hesitation!

Maud experienced an uncomfortable sensation, as though Anderson were looking down upon her from a greater moral height. She instinctively knew that their pleasant friendship had reached its limit.

"We shall see you at Eastwood on the fifth," were all the words she could utter;

nor were these spoken until he had entered the garden.

"Yes," he answered, facing about. "I must be present on the fifth. I promised your cousin that nothing should prevent me."

And so, without another word, he left her to torment herself with the idea that he was mortally wounded.

Directly after breakfast the next morning, Brownie made her appearance at the Nook; and, no sooner did she find herself alone with Maud than she began a longer explanation about the bank-book than she had ventured on in her letter. To her surprise, her excuses were received with coldness. Brownie felt that she had been snubbed, and was glad to seek refuge with Clement.

"It is good to see you about again," she said. "Maud and Mr. Anderson ought to have a medal apiece; don't you think they deserve them, Clement?"

"Maud ought to have one with a dozen claps, and, as for Mrs. Oliver, well, I think she deserves two dozen," he answered, warmly. "You mustn't leave Mrs. Oliver out of the reckoning, Brownie. I know I am a brute; I ought to feel grateful to Anderson, and all that sort of thing; but, for the life of me, I can't; and it is no use to pretend I can."

"You would, if you knew all that I do about him," she said. "If you knew what an interest he takes——"

"Oh," exclaimed Clement, "there's no need to tell me in whom Anderson takes an interest; not the least."

And he walked to the window, where he stood gazing at the mist which overhung the meadows.

"Then the secret is out!" cried Brownie, her face all smiles.

"Well, I have eyes and ears, Brownie, and, although everybody wouldn't give me credit for it, a brain as well. There, I know the fellow is a regular brick. It is of no use to struggle against the inevitable. I have learned that at any rate."

"Do you think auntie will arrive at the same conclusion?" she enquired, going to his side and looking cheerfully up to his face.

He stared at her in astonishment; he expected at least a blush, downcast eyes, or some sign of maidenly confusion. But she met his glance frankly and freely, and the light in her own was surely that of amusement.

Clement pulled himself together to meet it with equal self-possession.

"You will find Eastwood a pretty warm place all round, at first," he said; "but, in the end, things are sure to come right. You know, Brownie, I don't think mother would do anything to make either of you girls unhappy."

"I hope not. I don't think she would either," was her answer, and somehow her thoughts drifted away to affairs more particularly concerning herself and him.

"You haven't forgotten about the fifth?" she began, after a long silence. "I want you to be at home after seven o'clock on that evening, Clement. Of course, you intend going back to Mr. Staite's for a day or two."

"Yes," he said, grimly, "I shall certainly go back to Staite's; for how long is another matter."

"Quite," she replied, with a cheerful little laugh. "Promise me not to go out after seven o'clock on Friday, Clement."

"Any one would think you expected a second Massacre of Saint Bartholomew, Brownie."

"No, not quite so bad as that," she said; "but you don't seem much elated at your prospects."

"To be candid, no; I don't see much cause for elation."

"Yet, you may—you ought to be glad. In a few days you will begin a new existence; yet you won't look forward the least little bit."

"Look here, Brownie," he began very earnestly, "I no more believe that your efforts, whatever they may be, can be successful, than that I have not merited all I have to put up with. You and I are playing at cross purposes. You assess my happiness in pounds, shillings, and pence. I don't. Once it was different. At first, just after the dear old governor's death, when every hand was against me, and it seemed that my hand was against everybody's, I longed for nothing so much as confidence and trust. You did trust me; Heaven bless you for it. But now I want something rarer than money or the good opinion of a given number of fools. I cannot have what I want, and everything else may go! Don't misunderstand me," he continued, "I am not going to make an ass of myself. You will all think I am bound for the devil; but wait a few years. You will see me make my way in the world. You shan't be ashamed of me—in the long run. Never mind how poor

may be the beginning; in the end, I mean to conquer."

They sounded like brave words; it was Clement who spoke them; but it did not seem like the voice of Clement. Not of the Clement she had known. She was stirred with an enthusiasm equal to his own, and perhaps, for the first time in her life, she looked up to him. True, she did not believe his intentions would need to be carried out; but they were, nevertheless, a useful equipment. The same resolute determination to rise superior to circumstances must serve him equally well in any case.

"We will see about it all, after the fifth," she said.

"Ah, Brownie!" he murmured, and his voice was full of reproach.

"Be hopeful, Clement. I mean in the way I am hopeful; hopeful for the success of my plot. It is only until the next time I see you."

They had shaken hands; but still she hesitated, as though there was a weight upon her mind, from which she was anxious to relieve it.

"Clement," she said, coming to his side again; "the money must come first—and—and—there is your good name to think about. But—but that need not be all."

She was gone in a moment, and although he hastened after her as far as the door, it was only to see Kitty tearing along the lane, as if she had run away a second time.

AMERICAN TYPES.

THE trio of cities, situated at that point on the Atlantic coast of North America where the Hudson and East Rivers empty their broad streams into the majestic bay which is the principal portal to the eastern section of the United States, now contain a population of rather more than two and a half millions.

New York and Brooklyn—divided by the East River, but united by the huge suspension bridge, of which everybody has heard—are under separate municipal governments, and Jersey City, beyond the Hudson, is in a state which differs in many respects from the commonwealth of New York. But to the foreign observer, these three cities, were he to pass from one to the other of them, would seem like parts of one grand whole.

Their characteristics are mainly the same. In each there is the same vivacity, the same cosmopolitan atmosphere, the same Northern energy and strength, contrasted with Southern brilliancy of colour and dirt, which characterise the two others.

None of the three are typically American; nor is any one monopolised by the peculiarities of a single nationality. The people who, in New York, Brooklyn, and Jersey City, correspond to the lower middle-class in London, are the same curious compounds in each of the three cities. They are a kind of composite of Irish, and German, and Italian, and Pole, and Frenchman, with a certain delicacy of feature and liveness of limb, and, it must be added, a swagger of manner, which may be regarded as the American addition to the mixture. They have an accent peculiarly their own, as the London Cockneys have theirs. It is not at all like the Yankee twang of the New England States, nor has it any of the Western "burr."

The shibboleth of the metropolitan cockney of the American world is his enunciation of the letter "t" at the beginning of a word. Note a hundred smart mechanics, small shopmen, employés on railways and tramways, and in restaurants, and on the numerous ferries, which are such important features of life in the great centre, and you will observe that they all enunciate the "t" with the same curious hesitancy—a quaint lingering upon the letter giving to the English word of which it is a component, a kind of foreign air. Add to this a trifling thickness of pronunciation, which is universal in this class, and you have two of their principal distinguishing linguistic marks. "Twenty" is never plain "twenty;" it is "twunty," or "twonty," and said slowly, as if the word came hard.

In a grade a little lower down, where education has had but small chance, there is another peculiarity, which has no existence in New England, and is but rarely observable in the West, that is, the substitution of "d" for "t." Does it come from contact with the German in these great, sprawling conglomerations of population?

I know not; but certain it is that the German immigrant, who fancies with that robust confidence in himself, peculiar to his race, that he speaks English with astounding fluency and correctness, never gets rid of the "d," and goes on saying

"dey" and "dem," for "they" and "them," to the end of his life.

Remember that these remarks refer to the lower middle class, and not to the highly-cultivated and intellectual classes. Cultivated Germans get rid of the "d." But they never can speak English so but that the moment they open their mouths it is easy to discern that they are foreigners.

I sat in the gallery of the United States Senate when Carl Schurz took the oath, as a member of the Senate, in 1869. He was generally accounted, of all Germans in America, the one who spoke the purest English; and yet, in the pronunciation of the two or three words which he had to say in taking the oath, there were peculiarities enough to prove him a German, had his nationality been in dispute.

To return to the lower strata of the Teutonic stock, the German of direct importation and the German born in America, all keep their national "d" wonderfully well. But that scarcely seems a good reason why an Irish-American boy, an Italian-American boy, a Polish-American boy, and an American-American boy—if you will overlook the expression—of a certain class, should say "der" for "the," "dey" for "they," and "dem" for "them." Yet it is the fact that he does speak in this manner.

A bright, barefooted boy, of seven or eight years of age, jumped up beside me on the open tram-car, the other day, in New York, with his bundle of newspapers under his arm.

"Have you the 'World'?" I asked him.

"Dey ain't no 'Worlds' left; der man in de office wouldn't give me none, anyway," was his excuse.

Yet this was an American-looking child; no trace of German or Irish nationality appeared in his features.

Of the thousands of news-boys who, at the imminent peril of their thin little necks, are perpetually jumping on and off "horse-cars" in the three cities, the great majority speak like this; they grow up speaking so; but, oddly enough, when they reach mature years, and come into more direct contact with educated people, the peculiarity seems to diminish, and in many cases vanishes altogether. But the "roughs" and "toughs" keep it all their lives; and nothing is more incongruous than the spectacle of one of these roughs, attired in the height of fashion, and holding forth in his dialect, which is a picturesque jumble of

slang taken from the theatre, the prize-ring, the gutter, the political caucus, and the foreign languages with which he has acquired a "speaking acquaintance" by long contact. That each remark is pointed, or, as we might say, adorned by expectoration, is of course understood. The rough is not alone in the habit of constant expectoration. All the class of men mentioned above are endowed with this villainous habit, which is beginning to be even more nauseously common in France and Italy than in American cities, where it is now so exclusively confined to the class which we have under view. The smoking of very inferior tobacco, and the chewing of the same, accounts for most of it in America. The salivary glands are kept in a constant state of excitement by these odious practices. Chewing is still a confirmed practice with great numbers of these thin, frail-looking young men, who appear as if a wind would blow them away, but who are really capable of bearing any amount of fatigue. Regiments made up from this class during the Civil War, were found to stand harder marching and worse food than the sturdy country boys could endure.

We will leave the "rough" with only one or two remarks concerning him, and pay some attention to the respectable members of the class from which he has fallen. The criminal population of the three cities, New York, Brooklyn, and Jersey City, probably does not exceed sixty thousand, including these "roughs," some of whom never commit any more serious offence than a breach of the peace. The roughs once terrorised certain quarters, claiming exemption from all operation of law when they were within the bounds of these quarters. They were organised in gangs, and pillaged restaurants, plundered unlucky countrymen who strayed within their reach, and insulted women. When they had become so bold as to constitute a permanent danger, the police department took them in hand, and the process of "railroading" was applied to them. This process consists in bringing up a noted criminal at the morning session of a court, sentencing him in the afternoon, and delivering him to a long term of imprisonment in some State prison during the evening. When this had been done by wholesale, the roughs remaining at liberty consulted together, became more pacific, and did not so openly defy the law. It was altogether too solemn business to

knock down and rob a countryman in the morning, and in the evening to be serving the beginning of a sentence to "nine years' imprisonment with hard labour" for highway robbery.

When you talk of the lower middle-class, in these great centres of American population, you find that you must immediately begin talking of the "saloon" also; and in the saloon, the "rough" is a very conspicuous figure. There is no class in New York, or its adjacent cities, which corresponds exactly to the very degraded poor, who live in constant misery and squalor in London. The people of whom we are treating all earn good wages weekly, and spend the money in living fairly well, dressing, sometimes, better than their employers, and amusing themselves freely.

If it were not for the saloon—that is to say, if the saloon, with all its odious surroundings and suggestions, could be forever banished from their existences, their amusements and their lives, in general, would be innocent enough. But the work of abolishing the saloon can only be gradual.

The Rev. Dr. Crosby, of the Presbyterian Church, says that, in eighteen years of temperance campaign work, in New York City, the number of drinking places has been reduced from rather more than ten thousand to rather less than six thousand. Nothing of this has been done by prohibition, which could not be enforced, simply because the saloons control the police.

"Saloon politics" are the most formidable of all the corrupting influences with which those, who have the purity of the ballot at heart, are called to deal. It is in these places that are hatched the schemes for stealing the public moneys. It is the knowledge that the owners of these establishments will nullify all their efforts, which prevents the wealthy and respectable citizens from trying to have clean and well-paved streets, and from endeavouring to reform numerous abuses.

"The New York Post," the leading evening journal in the city, and the representative of the highest culture and literary talent in the country, said, the other day, that "the municipal interests of this vast community are now entirely at the mercy of the liquor dealers and the criminal classes."

This is a strong statement; but it does not appear to be an exaggeration of the truth.

We will next make an excursion into politics. Some day the cultivated and wealthy classes, joining with the vast numbers of orthodox religious folk of moderate means, will succeed in putting down the saloon as an institution. But it will not be until the twentieth century has already well advanced in its first quarter. Meantime, the evil influences are deplorably many. The curious jargon which is spoken by so many thousands of these lower middle-class folk, comes from the saloon.

It must be remembered that a public drinking place in America is not at all like an English public-house. There are no compartments to separate gentlemen from rough labourers. Women are never seen before or behind the bar or counter. The entrance of a woman into a drinking saloon, for the purpose of purchasing a drink, would create as profound a sensation as if a battery were to open fire in the room. The same small shopkeepers and workmen, who consider it a good joke to go home intoxicated to the bosom of their families, would cry shame upon the bold creature, and very possibly the barman might suggest her retreat to a neighbouring restaurant. As for barmaids, that is out of the question. America has very positive notions about that.

The saloon is a long hall, sometimes very elegantly, and always fairly well, decorated, with a bar running its whole length on one side. It is intended as a social and convivial exchange, and as it is the only public resort into which every male person can penetrate unchallenged, and as tradition sanctions fully free conversation within its limits, it is not strange that some very queer language is heard. It is from the saloon that come most of the slang terms which sound so oddly to English ears. Some of them arise from an imperfect knowledge of the English tongue; they are considered amusing, and the newspapers which cater to the public, pick them up and perpetuate them. Thus it happens that a popular journal, printed in New York or Brooklyn, contains columns of words and phrases which would be quite unintelligible to a newly-arrived Englishman, and which he certainly never would hear in the society which he would frequent. The "people" is fond of one or two rough descriptive words which it can apply over and over again to men, and policies, and institutions.

The minor theatres have a slang of their

own, differing largely from that in use in England, and their actors bring this to the saloon, where it is soon set in circulation. The result of the union of the linguistic peculiarities of the roughs, the cheap actors, the pot-house politicians, and the ignorant foreigners striving to express themselves in English, is a composite speech which is distinctly vulgar, at the same time that it is forcible and direct. A vein of humour twinkles all through it, and from time to time redeems the flat vulgarity. There is no absolute coarseness of expression—there would be short shrift given to that in a country where women do not sink down, as in England and on the Continent, into degradation of the most brutal character, and women would hear it on the street, if not in the saloon.

I find that I have confounded the terms "middle-class" and "people" in the preceding paragraphs, and perhaps that is the very best possible illustration of the position of the class some of whose characteristics I am trying to describe. It is neither people in the French sense, nor lower middle-class in the English sense; it is an admixture of the two. The foreign strain is observable in almost every member of it, in these three cities of New York, Brooklyn, and Jersey City. It has not a very extensive acquaintance with the rest of the country, or the history of the nation, or the traditions of its politics; it is patriotic because it is natural to be so, and because every one loves his home best. The Church doesn't affect it much—the Protestant Church not at all; the Catholic only in outward observances. It reads newspapers whose tone it makes; consequently, it knows nothing of the public opinion of the country. It bets on horse-races; makes a hero out of a prize-fighter; spends hundreds of thousands on "base-ball;" and considers the politics of its section as the most exciting topic within the range of the human intellect. It believes that it is superior to the whole exterior world; the insufficiency of its education does not allow it a chance to see how dense its ignorance is; the comparative ease of its material condition keeps down any tendency towards even the lower forms of the ideal. The two intellectual influences which might widen its mind, and save it from many grievous errors—the newspaper and the theatre—are hopelessly degraded to its level. The variety theatre is at the lowest ebb of inanity; its few artistic impulses are embarrassed

in a web of silliness. The newspaper goes with the current, and magnifies the very vices which it should correct, or sternly condemn. The visitor from other sections of America observing this class, which certainly forms a majority in the three cities of New York, Brooklyn, and Jersey City, feels ill at ease, as if he were newly come among foreigners. These are not American ways; this is not American sentiment—these people, with their jargon, have they not come from another planet? Just above them—if we may say above with relation to American sets of population—is a large class of men and women, religious, temperate, thoroughly American in speech and sentiment, with whom the jargon-speakers and saloon-frequenterers never come into contact. Neither do they ever appear to meet, or even momentarily to rub against the upper class, as you would say in England, the cultivated, wealthy, and travelled public. The jargon-speaker drives on Sunday in the public parks, the other classes never do. He visits the seaside, and sometimes attends a concert or a theatre on Sunday. The others consider such conduct profanation. His heroes are not their heroes; his literature is not theirs; he does not hate or envy them; he ignores them. In his group of cities he finds himself a prevailing type; he believes himself the best outcome of American civilisation, and he does not trouble himself about the others. If he thinks of them at all, it is as the Irish in New England think of the Yankees, as "a negligible quantity."

Reduction of the saloon-power, the introduction of real civil service—without Barnacles—and a reform in the press, will teach this curious international mob its place. But, as we have said, all that work cannot be accomplished until the twentieth century has got well under way. These peculiar people will outlast this rising generation.

IRON CAGES.

A GOOD deal of doubt attaches to the statement of Justin that Alexander the Great, in a fit of anger against the philosopher Callisthenes, ordered him to be deprived of his ears, nose, and lips, and, in this frightfully-mutilated condition, shut him up in an iron cage with a dog—which was intended as a special mark of contumely—but it is known that imprison-

ment in a cage of iron was an occasional form of punishment among the ancients. One regrets that its cruelly-ingenuous inventor's name has not descended to posterity, to be loaded with the contempt and loathing it deserves. An idea so terribly inhuman can have emanated only from a mind accustomed to the sight of suffering, and delighting with a fiendish pleasure in its infliction.

According to Seneca, whose authority is unimpeachable, Lysimachus mutilated Telesphorus of Rhodes, and then, for a long time, immured him in a cage, "like some new and extraordinary animal;" and, indeed, with his head gashed and scarred, and his shapeless body, he retained scarcely a vestige of manhood. Add to this the torments of hunger and the hideous filthiness through which he dragged himself to and fro on his aching knees—what a ghastly spectacle! It was so repulsive as to forbid pity. Yet, if he who underwent these tortures had no likeness to humanity, still less had he who imposed them.

In modern history, the earliest allusion we can find to this punishment belongs to the twelfth century, when Sangjar, sixth and last of the Seljukian Sultans of Persia, having been taken prisoner by the Turks, was thrown into an iron cage (1152). This is the hero who, for his valour, was styled the second Alexander, and whom his subjects so warmly loved that they prayed for him a year after his decease. He was a liberal patron of Persian poetry, and, after a reign of nearly fifty years, deserved a better fate.

From the East, the iron cage found its way into Italy, and speedily found patrons. It was exactly the kind of punishment that suited the revengeful temper and lust of torture of the Italian Princes. Thus, Entius, natural son of Frederick the Second, who was made King of Sardinia in 1258, having soon afterwards been defeated and taken prisoner by the Guelphs at Fossalta, was conveyed to Bologna, and there exposed in an iron cage.

A similar fate befell Napoleon della Torre, lord of Milan, after his capture at Desio by Otho Visconti, January the twenty-first, 1277. He died at Baradello, near Como, after nineteen months of torture.

Readers of Dante will remember the allusion in the "Purgatorio," canto seven, to

William, that brave Marquis, for whose cause,
The deed of Alexandria and his war
Makes Montferrat and Canavese weep.

William, Marquis of Montferrat, was treacherously seized at Alessandria, in 1290, by his own subjects, and shut up in an iron cage, in which he ended his life in the following year. This act of treason was severely punished by the people of Alessandria and the Canavese—afterwards a part of Piedmont—who took up arms to avenge their unfortunate Prince.

To this day the iron cages used for prisoners in mediæval Italy, may be seen in the tower della Gabbia, at Milan; in the citadel of Piacenza; and elsewhere.

After the victorious invasion of Scotland, by Edward the First, in 1306, three brothers of Robert Bruce and several of the Scottish nobles perished on the scaffold. The conqueror did not spare even women in his mighty rage, and two of them—the Countesses of Buchan—mother and daughter—were immured in cages of timber and exposed to the ridicule of the populace. It was an act unworthy of the great Plantagenet; but he was then afflicted with a mortal disease, and indignant at the uprising of Scotland under the Bruce.

James the Fourth, last King of Majorca, having fallen into the hands of Pedro the Fourth, King of Aragon, was similarly imprisoned for more than three years.

It was long one of the commonplaces of moralists that the great Turkish Sultan, Bajazet the First, whose magnificence had been the astonishment of European travellers, fell from his pride and pomp of place as a punishment for his arrogance, and, a prisoner in the hands of Timour, or Tamerlane, was exhibited in an iron cage. Gibbon, after summing up the authorities for this statement, accepts it with some qualification:

"Timour," he says, "betrayed a design of leading his Royal captive in triumph, to Samarkand. An attempt to facilitate his escape, by digging a mine under the tent in which Bajazet had been lodged, provoked the Mogul usurper to impose a harsher restraint; and, in his perpetual marches, an iron cage or a wagon might be invented, not as a wanton insult, but as a rigorous precaution. Timour had read in some fabulous history a similar treatment of one of his predecessors, a King of Persia, and Bajazet was condemned to represent the person and expiate the guilt of the Roman Cæsar. But the strength of his mind and body fainted under the trial, and his premature death might, without injustice, be ascribed to the severity of Timour."

But Mr. Finlay has shown that the word "kafis," which had been translated into an iron cage, really meant nothing more or less than the Byzantine litter, enclosed with bars, and carried by two horses, in which the women of the harem in the East undertake their journeys. So that the world is one "moral lesson" the poorer. Bajazet chose the litter as a conveyance, that he might not be affronted by the gaze of the Tartar soldiers.

Our English biographers of the immortal Maid of Orleans, Jeanne d'Arc—that "light of ancient France"—generally forget to notice the fact, as attested by Pierre Cusquel and Guillaume Manchon, two witnesses examined at her posthumous trial, or revision of the first trial—that on her way to Rouen she was carried in an iron cage. Their testimony may be read in that valuable storehouse of information, Quicherat's edition of the "*Procès de Condamnation et de Réhabilitation de Jeanne d'Arc*."

For Louis the Eleventh of France—whom Sir Walter Scott and Mr. Henry Irving have made so familiar to the English public—the iron cage had a great attraction, and he seems to have equipped with it nearly every one of his state prisoners. When the Duc de Nemours, previous to his trial, was transferred to the Bastille, he was put in a cage of iron; and the King, learning that some indulgence had been shown to so illustrious a prisoner, wrote in the most uncompromising terms to the Sire de Saint-Pierre, one of the commissaries appointed to try the unfortunate Prince. He was not pleased, he said, to find that the fetters had been removed from the Duke's limbs; that he had been allowed to leave his cage; and that he had attended mass when women were present. And he charged him to take care that the Prince never left his cage, except to be put to the question—that is, to be tortured—and that this should take place in his own apartment. Other important personages, in the reign of Louis, made acquaintance with these iron cages of his; among others, William of Harancourt, Bishop of Verdun, and the Cardinal de la Balze. According to an eminent French antiquary, each cage was about nine feet long, eight feet broad, and seven feet high, and consisted of a ponderous framework of timber, strengthened by solid iron clasps, and fenced in with stout iron bars, weighing altogether a couple of hundred pounds, and costing

about three hundred and sixty-seven livres, at the then value of money.

Philippe de Commines, the historian, makes some characteristic comments upon King Louis the Eleventh and his cages. "It is quite true," he says, "that the King our master ordered the construction of some 'rigorous prisons'—cages of iron and of wood, covered with plates of iron outwardly and internally, and with terrible iron bars, each about eight feet wide, and about the height of a man, or one foot more. The man who designed them was the Bishop of Verdun, and in the very first that was made he was incontinently immured, and lay therein for fourteen years. Many of us since have poured our curses upon him; and I, for one, having had an eight months' taste of this kind of captivity. Formerly, too, the King caused the Germans to make for him some very heavy and terrible fetters to fasten upon prisoners' feet, and an iron ring to clasp round the ankle, with a solid chain attached, and a great iron ball at the end of the chain; these instruments of torture were known as '*les fillettes du Roy*,' or '*the King's Maidens*.' These, nevertheless, I have seen on the feet of many prisoners of rank, who have since risen into great honour and great joy, and have received many favours from the King.

"And now, as in his time, were established these noxious and diverse prisons, so he, before his death, found himself in similar and greater prisons, and also felt much greater fear than was felt by any of his victims; the which thing I hold to be a very great grace for him, and to be part of his purgatory—and I tell it here to show that there is no man, however high his dignity, who does not suffer, either in secret, or openly, and more particularly he who makes others suffer. The said lord, towards the end of his days, enclosed his château of Plessis-lez-Tours with great bars of iron, like gratings; and at each corner placed four mantlets of iron, firm and solid. The said gratings were set up against the wall on the other side of the fosse, and there were numerous iron spikes, each with three or four heads, let into the masonry, very close to each other. And, moreover, he ordered ten cross-bow men to be stationed at each mantlet, within the said fosse, to fire at all who approached before the gate was open; and he willed that they should lie down in the fosse, and retire behind the said mantlets of iron. Is it possible," Commines continues,

"to confine a King, and guard him more closely, and in a narrower prison than he confined himself in? Those cages in which he held les autres, were some eight feet square; and he, who was so great a King, had a little court in the château wherein to take the air; yet he never came there, but kept himself to the gallery, never leaving it, except through the apartments; and he went to mass without passing through the said court. How can one say that this King did not suffer as much as his victims? he who thus immured himself, and was afraid of his children, of his nearest kinsmen? who changed and moved about from day to day the servants he had fostered—the servants who owed everything to him—yet not one of whom did he dare to trust? who enthralled himself in this fashion with such curious fetters and closures? It is true the château was larger than a common prison; but so was he greater than common prisoners." Thus sagely speaks Philippe de Commynes.

There is a French tradition that Ludovic Sforza, Duke of Milan, whom the Swiss gave up to the French in 1500, was shut up by order of Louis the Twelfth in an iron cage at the Château de Loches. But the tradition is contradicted by the narratives of several contemporary writers; and among others by Carranti, who, in his memoir of Duke Ludovic, describes the designs and characters he had traced on "the walls" of his prison.

John of Leyden, the leader of the Anabaptists, and hero of Meyerbeer's opera of "Le Prophète," having been taken prisoner at the capture of Munster, on the twenty-fifth of June, 1585, and hearing the Bishop of that city reproach him for the pecuniary losses of which he had been the cause—"I can tell you," said he, "how you can gain much more than you have lost. Let there be made a conveyance of iron, strengthened with leather, and provided with straps, and shut me up in it; afterwards promenade me through the whole country, and when everybody pays you a sou for looking at me, you will accumulate a sum of money much larger than you have lost." The Bishop acted upon a part of this advice; for he sent John of Leyden and two of his confederates from place to place for a considerable period, to be shown to persons who might be willing to pay for staring at them. In the following January John was brought back to Leyden, and, with his confederates, was put to death in the most barbarous fashion.

It was in a cage of iron that Pugatscheff, the impostor who assumed the title of Peter the Third, and made a desperate stroke for the Russian Crown, was conveyed from Jaïck to Moscow, where he was executed on the tenth of January, 1775.

The use of these cages is known both to the Chinese and the Japanese. When the Russian Captain, Golownin, with two of his officers and four sailors, fell into the hands of the latter, these unfortunates were shut up in cages set side by side in the same chamber.

PICTURE TALK.

THE English are often reproached with being indifferent to the claims of Art—of Art, that is, in its severest sense—but in these days no one can justly say that they are neglectful of Art Galleries. Almost every year a new gallery is set going, with its own representative school of painters, its own special art tendency, and its own illustrated catalogue—price one shilling. Every year an additional superficial area of wall, covered with painted canvas or paper, has to be gazed at by the ever-increasing London summer crowd; and, at dinner-party or reception, the stream of talk runs yet more persistently upon the merits and demerits of these attempts to reproduce Nature.

After the first week in May, the man who is lucky enough to sit fairly often at the mahogany of upper middle-class dinner-givers; or to spend his afternoons and evenings in drawing-rooms, where music and recitations are provided for his amusement; might, if he were so disposed, write an essay on the prevailing taste in art amongst the picture-gallery-visiting population of Great Britain. A work of this sort would doubtless be most useful; but it would hardly command a large sale on the bookstalls; so our diner-out would probably do better to make an estimate of the educational value of this vast display of pictorial art upon the various schools of taste which may be found within the four-mile cab radius; to discover how much the true feeling for art has been fostered in the average Briton by the contemplation of all the pictures of mark of the year; and to search for any leanings towards certain art heresies which are now rather prevalent—Naturalism, Realism, Impressionism, and the rest of them.

Kensington and Bayswater, though properly obedient in most things, and ready to run through the gap after the bellwether, assert a certain amount of independence in matters of art, and supply worshippers at all the different shrines of the national art temple. But tendencies towards heresy are very rare. A short investigation will show that the ideas of that great class which—as after-dinner speakers are never tired of declaring—has made our England the great and happy land she is this day, run, as to matters artistic, in rather a narrow groove. It is hard to understand why there should be this unchanged and unchanging adherence to a particular phase of art on the part of these men who, in their own particular line, leave no stone unturned, and every day strike out new ways of trade, so that there may be no corner of the earth ungladdened by grey shirtings or Birmingham hardware. But there it is. To begin with, Art for the class in question means oil-painting and nothing else. At the great Philistine show there are rooms for water-colours and sculpture; but these are never crowded, and the majority of the visitors are those who come to find a seat. Philistia, as a rule, is kind to its votary, and gives him what he wishes to look at—landscapes, with yellowy-green trees, and bluey-grey shadows, with packed-up clouds, and proper sized patches of sky thrown in between. In genre, the poor governess and the fisherman's wife are safe cards. The Irish peasant, at one time, was a great favourite, and it is still almost impossible to overdo the market with the varying humours of babyhood and serio-comic animals.

Portraits must be smooth and pinky—a little extra carnation thrown in for the ladies; and for the men, guns; with fly-books lying about for territorial magnates or apocryphal sportsmen; while, for the frankly commercial, the silver inkstand and the crimson curtain are still valuable properties. Any departure from these canons is liable to cause the picture to be branded as outlandish, or fanciful, and new-fangled; and works to which such epithets as these can be applied, are not often hung upon the walls of the upper middle-class.

But for several years there have been signs that Philistia is uneasy, and this season they point to open revolt within her very walls. Our middle-class gazer,

whether he will or no, has to look at landscapes painted, apparently, in soot and water, with skies the colour of the Thames at Poplar; at haggard faces staring out of dreary expanses of grey and dirty-white by way of genre; and at portraits in which the soot has again been called in to denote shadow, and the whitening brush for the high light. The mind staggers in contemplating the result, should this revolt become a revolution; but Philistia will probably be wise in time, and not suffer the eccentricities of genius to check the cheerful flow of shillings at the turnstiles.

When an investigator has turned on the picture tap with the lady he has taken down to dinner, he will discover that there are other critics than the gentlemen who ink their fingers for our benefit in the daily press. It will be a circumstance to be noted if he does not find his neighbour ready to enlighten him as to the merits and imperfections of the leading pictures of the year. Her discourse, on the whole, will give a very good idea of the scope and character of the art of criticism, as it is practised nowadays over the whole range of subjects with which that art is supposed to deal.

The touch-stone by which the lady will pronounce a picture to be good or bad, will be the pleasure or distaste which the sight of it raises in her mind. There is no allowance made on points of technique, concerning which the painter, with his training and experience, might be supposed to know better than the gallery observer after a minute's glance; no reference to principles about which Hazlitt and Lessing have muddled their brains.

Since it is a well-authenticated fact that there are as many opinions as there are critics, it is obvious that the contemporary dinner-table criticism escapes all danger of falling into dismal exactness. It is as variable as the spring climate, and the dining-out investigator need not be surprised at hearing his right-hand neighbour praise a work of art for the very same feature which has earned the censure of the lady on his left.

And here, be it noted, that one imperfection in a work, otherwise perfect, is enough to condemn it utterly. The blot, and nothing but the blot, is the point to be seized; and all the excellences are treated as if they were not; just as our "lively" neighbours, when they sit down to pen their experience after a trip "outré manche," often find

little to record save the fact that there are sometimes fogs in London.

In vain will you plead that the modelling and flesh tints of a certain lady's portrait are admirable, if your dinner-table critic has discovered that there is anything wrong in the fall of her skirt or the cut of her bodice.

The revolt to which allusion has already been made has been somewhat trying this year to the more rigid sticklers for the old order. Several painters have so far forgotten themselves as to treat good, old, well-crystallised themes in a most reprehensible manner.

There is a "Neptune," for instance, as unlike as possible to that god as he is described and delineated in "Pinnock's Catechism of Heathen Mythology." There he is given as a sort of inferior Jupiter, or an Old Father Thames, who has drifted out beyond the Foreland and got some seaweed mixed up in his ozy locks. Now he is drawn as an Apollo, who has laid down the lyre for the trident; while everybody knows that Amphitrite was not a bit like that lovely young woman on the dolphin beside him, but a plump fish-wife from the Olympian Billingsgate.

Then there is a Diana, a lithe, muscular maiden, harking on some dogs which look as if they meant business. What has she in common with the proper Diana, a smirking plump lady, more like a teacher of deportment than a huntress? It is true that ladies who, being lightly clad, spend their days in hunting, might be supposed to become tanned and wiry; but this is nothing to the point. The artist has drawn Diana as she has never been drawn before, and, therefore, he is wrong.

Almost as perplexing as the mind immovably fixed, is the erratic one which, for some by-reason, takes up with some one or other of those strange amorphous outgrowths of art which are so much with us nowadays.

There is the young lady, one of whose schoolfellows is cousin to a distinguished member of the Introspectionist School, and on this score she, who a little time ago worshipped Gustave Doré as the greatest painter living or dead, can now see beauty in nothing except the canvases of those gentlemen who paint landscapes in orange and purple and vermilion. There is another who goes into raptures over the works of that school of painters who seem to be able to paint nothing but ballet-girls—and such ballet-girls! Dirty faces

and arms and legs, stand out painfully conspicuous in a setting of scabbled white paint, part of it clothes, and part of it background. Then there is the middle-aged lady, the wife of a gentleman in the City, whose sister, the Mayoress of Slagborough, has been painted by young Creamly Skinner; and this fact, in her estimation, is enough to place C. S., who is really an impostor of the Pinckney School, at the head of the masters of portraiture past and present.

By the end of June, our diner-out will have had almost enough of such discussion, and possibly may begin to wish that a new Omar, with an aversion to pictures, and perhaps to painters as well, would arise and repeat on the Thames the Alexandrian conflagration. Such a savage wish, however, would certainly savour of ingratitude. Let him cast his memory back over that series of solemn dinner-parties of the past season, and then ask himself how he would have succeeded in making his store of small talk hold out from soup to dessert without the ever fresh and ever fertile topic of the pictures of the year.

YACHTING IN STILL WATERS.

IN FIVE PARTS. PART II.

WITH a north-east wind bound to Poole, it is best to go out by the north channel, round Hurst Castle, leaving the Shingles and Needles to the left. Far away at sea, long black banks, developing into drawn-out trails of smoke, show where the great hulls of homeward-bounders are coming up from the under world.

The cliffs of the mainland, from Hurst to Christchurch Head, are yellow sandstone, rugged and inhospitable except by land, where Highcliffe and other fine old houses nestle among the trees.

Muddiford—a little bar-harbour and watering-place—is sheltered somewhat by Christchurch Head; the Giant Priory—a splendid sea mark—looming large in the haze over the low land. About here, the spinaker is in frequent requisition, as the breeze becomes flighty out of the bay. At one moment faint ribs of water, exactly the pattern of sea-sand left on the beach by the receding tide, ruffle in from sea, bringing hopes of a true wind, but soon fade away into an oily calm.

Visions of a comfortable dinner inside Branksea Island wax fainter and ever fainter, when the Bournemouth steamer

comes up astern, her paddles sounding like great churns a dozen miles away. A tow seems now possible; but she passes far inshore of us, takes up her Bourne-mouth passengers, and fizzes away to Poole—a mile and more across our bows. With her departs our last hope; so, when the latest drain of the ebb is done, we cast anchor in eight fathoms, off the outer Poole rocks, and “wish for the day.” From side to side, with wearisome regularity, all through the hours of darkness, we rolled, till the dawn of day, when, getting under weigh, Poole Bar was crossed at a fortunate moment, keeping Standfast Point and Old Harry and his Wife immediately astern. It is, however, only just to state that in twenty-six years this voyage was the only one when we could not get inside before nightfall.

Poole is the shiftiest of bars, always altering the position of its deepest channel; and, as under no circumstances is there more than fourteen feet at high water, the size of vessels entering is much circumscribed.

The Little Sea and Curlew Cottage—newly risen out of the charming, but desolate shore—are the only breaks in the low monotony of the coast trending towards South Haven Point, where the narrow channel between the buoys is still further narrowed by the machinations of the harbour authorities, who began a breakwater here, of all places, and then, thinking better, or worse, of the plan, desisted, and have left a monument of folly and indecision in the shape of loose stones, which require a wide berth to be given them.

The Hook, stretching out from North Haven Point, with a small boat passage between, is a most dangerous shoal. In south or east winds, the sea roars and breaks upon it with such violence that the sound can be heard seven or eight miles away, up in the quiet waters of Wych Lake.

North Haven Point possesses many charms for the unsophisticated, with its bare hotel, exposed to every wind of heaven, the two lights denoting the fairway, and a coast-guard station; albeit, there is a certain sameness in the drifting sandhills, partly clothed with rush and bent, and a few gnarled firs.

The entrance to South Deep is not rendered alluring by a wreck lying head downwards on the steep bank; but we pass on, and are in Branksea Roads.

The old castle of Branksea, or Brownsea, happily survives, to teach our nineteenth century builders solidity and beauty; but, unluckily, Colonel Waugh, a former owner, added on to the stout old fabric a Tudor edifice, which still survives, though quite unfinished.* Still, it has yet great capabilities, and may be made a charming home. The spoils and art-treasures of many nations, chiefly Venetian, find a temporary sanctuary in these rough-plastered rooms. Sculpture, carvings, paintings, tile work, seem surprised to find themselves leaning against the lath and plaster, or prone on the boarded floor. Should anything of especial interest be missing from its place in old Venetian church or palazzo, perhaps a search among the rough rooms at Branksea might bring it to light. Great trunks of curios, for which large sums have been given, await a disentanglement when time and chance make it possible. Certainly nobody but the ancient retainer who takes you round, and least of all the learned and accomplished owner, has probably the least idea of what the walls of the castle really contain. A fine hall in the old part is occasionally used for concerts; but otherwise the present lord of the soil—Mr. Cavendish Bentinck—lives in the charming villa clothed with pine wood, formerly intended for the clergyman.

Branksea is a lovely island, from seaward especially; the castle and church nestle so picturesquely under the great forest-trees. Numerous handsome wells from Venice, the Italian statuary, and Roman bath should all be seen. It is supposed that the tower of the castle was built in Henry the Eighth's time; and it was, till the reign of Elizabeth, Crown property. One Mr. Benson, of Poole, the then owner, built the hall about 1730; and Humphry Sturt, an ancestor of Lord Alington, made additions to the castle. Every description of scenery rewards a ramble through the island. There are lakes, woods, lovers' walks, winding drives among the bracken and pines, quaintly named after their owners, besides well-cultivated fields; and the disused pottery works on the south side are quite out of sight behind the fire-crested hill. A real triumph of art over nature is evidenced in the vast tract of over a hundred acres of mud and water, which, about thirty-five years ago, was wrested

* At this moment an army of workmen are actually employed in completing the unfinished part. July, 1889.

from the harbour and slowly drained. A sea-wall encloses it, and at the outfall two small water-mills ceaselessly twirl in the useful work of reclamation. Black ooze still exists to a great depth; but coarse grasses cover it luxuriantly, and then withering, add a little substance each season. The twined roots of sedges, rushes, and water-plants bind it all closer and closer, till now, after a lapse of years, cattle and horses graze where ships once sailed, and it may be called dry land. Snipe and lap-wing plover, with cuckoos and reed-buntings, are constantly hovering over this reclaimed land, wheeling to and fro in an agitated manner, and piping a lament for their fast-disappearing fens and damp fastnesses. The level of this drained marsh is lower than the water outside, owing to the shrinkage of the soil in drying; a good sea-wall is therefore a necessity. The church dedicated to Saint Mary was built by Colonel Waugh in 1853. Here is an oaken roof, said by the Rev. T. Bennett to be from the council chamber of Richard the Second at Crosby Hall. Lovely stained glass fills the windows, while the two winged angels, holding Bible and Prayer-book, are from the church of Saint Lucia at Venice, purchased when it was pulled down for the railway. A painting of the Crucifixion is supposed to be by Murillo.

From the end of the sea-wall a yellow sand-cliff rises abruptly from the beach, thickly mantled with dark pines. Promontory after promontory is rounded till the cluster of white dwellings, backed with wind-bent firs, opens. These comfortable houses, called Maryland, after Mrs. Waugh, were built for the workmen in the potteries, which were carried on for many years with varying success at Branksea. The chimneys are now, alas! cold, and the works thrown up. With excellent pipe-clay at the door, easy to work—a portion of the cliff having merely to be dug away—with sea-carriage at the pier where ships of two hundred tons can lie at all times of tide, it is difficult to conceive how failure could possibly have resulted.

Leaving Branksea Roads, the channel to Poole from the Bell Buoy is capitally marked all the way up till you anchor in Poole Roads in company with several light vessels, waiting for clay, and a handsome cutter-yacht or two. Poole Harbour, properly so-called, consists of an inner basin with wharves on each side, where ships of considerable burthen lie alongside,

discharging coal, grain, or other cargo, and taking in the blue clay peculiar to this part of the Isle of Purbeck, which, coming in barges from Middlebere in the Wych Channel, and Ridge in the Wareham Channel, forms the great export of Poole. A drawbridge spans the harbour, above where the great majority of ships lie, from whence a wide sheet of shallow water expands into Holes Bay, of very little use commercially. Winter and summer a string of large, flat barges, full of pottery-clay, may be seen in tow of the two tugs "Comet" and "Telegraph," cleverly winding down the intricate reaches of Middlebere, Wych, Ball's Lake, and Wareham, on their way to the schooners and ketches lying alongside the quay at Poole, which convey it to Runcorn, Stockholm, various German ports, and London. All the long working-day the wharves are alive with active, toiling humanity of many nations; the creak and whirr of cranes hoisting in and out, the monotonous voice of the tally-man, are never ceasing till the day is done and a welcome stillness succeeds to toil. Soon the skipper and his men, partially cleaned, seat themselves on deck upon anything handy, and enjoy the pipe of peace, while the skipper's often comely wife, with a plaid shawl over her head, sits in the companion chatting with her man. The townspeople pace up and down; those living hard by, with a clean apron and bare head, but bearing the inevitable baby, look idly into each ship as they saunter by, and think how tired the sailors look as they come slowly up the hatchway after the evening meal.

On the Hamworthy side, the two excursion steamers, "Brodict Castle" and "Lord Elgin," having come rushing into the small harbour at fifteen knots, and nearly swamped all the boats with the huge wave they make, are now at rest from rivalry for the night, moored side by side, and are blowing off steam with a great roar, subsiding into spasmodic sobs. As the light of day fades, heaps of red-brown nets are piled high in the stern-sheets of boats, which go forth, rowed by three or four sturdy fisher-folk, to pass the night in the long reaches, returning with dawn as often as not, having, with the disciples of old, "toiled all night and caught nothing." But each evening sees them set forth again with renewed hope, their glad, vigorous, quick strokes and cheery voices sounding over the quiet mud-

banks long after they have passed out of sight.

These toilers of the night are a sturdy, brave people, the descendants of those seamarauders, who, as early as the eighth century, set out from Poole quay fearlessly in their crazy ships, ever prepared for sea-fights or brawls of any description. Poole men were always excellent seamen, plucky in danger, and the most daring smugglers in England. Worth says, that the Danes first invaded England at Weymouth, in Dorsetshire. At Wareham, Canute first landed, having presumably been foiled at Poole in passing, by the intrepidity of the Poole men. But the Danes took for their motto "All things come to those who know how to wait," for they certainly afterwards made Poole their headquarters, as we are told that King Alfred's ships waited in Swanage Bay—let us hope not with an east wind, otherwise, they would have had a lively time of it—just round the corner, hidden behind Standfast Point and Old Harry (who was wifeless in those days, as she then formed part of the cliff) whence they pounced upon the Danish ships, as they came out of Poole Harbour with the tide, and drove one hundred and twenty ashore. Their hard timbers sometimes, even to this day, double up the eel-prodder's fork, and float up to surprise the dwellers hereabouts with their primitive but enduring workmanship.

Eel-catching is a great industry in Poole Harbour. The instant the mud has "shot," the eel-catchers, in their mud-flats drawing about a couple of inches, are on the spot, and getting gingerly out in their mud-pattens, proceed, with three-pronged barbed forks on very long, slender poles, to prod about in the holes, still covered with water. All that are thus brought up are deposited in a bucket; but, as is the case in all fisheries, it is the middlemen who fatten on the toilers. Eels would be caught in these sheltered spots, lonely, secluded, and yet close to the salt water—conditions peculiarly suitable to their habits—in very much greater abundance were it not for the gulls, storks, herons, and divers, who alight upon the mud in battalions, when it is only just covered, and gobble up the eels and fish left stranded unawares by the retreating tide.

In the curious refraction so common here, caused by heat upon the mud-flats, and explained in optics as "the deviation of a ray of light from that right line in which it would have continued, if not pre-

vented by the thickness of the medium through which it passes," the birds look like regiments of choristers with long, white surplices, marching in ranks as they perambulate the mud in search of food. When the two red harbour-lights have long been lit, and the "Brodick Castle" is sending forth her last dying sob, an advancing sound of puffing and fizzing comes from the direction of Wareham, and soon after the "Comet" sweeps round the corner with a long string of clay-laden barges from Ridge in tow, each cleverly steered, and she, too, moors higher up the quay amid a perfect forest of curiously-painted Dutch, German, and Belgian craft, and rests from her labours. Many yachts hail from Poole, and are laid up here. The Wanhill-built racers were a great success in their day; and the numerous and curiously-diverse pleasure-boats moored in the shallows on each side of the entrance, from the fine racing cutter to the "home-made" yawl with wavy lines and square tuck, show that it is a maritime people, hereabouts, who takes its pleasure by sea.

Now, alas! the nice old ship-building yards, that were wont in bygone days to send forth those wooden walls that brought glory to our nation, have passed away. The fine, powerful slips, grass-grown and desolate, are now tenanted by two or three stout coasting craft, with gaunt ribs standing up against the sky, or a smack repairing after an over-hard bumping on Poole Bar. The steel ship-building works on the Clyde have filched all our wooden yacht-building trade from us, never to be recalled. As racing machines for a definite purpose, they are all very well; but once stranded on a hard bottom with anything of a sea on, the dinghey is strongly to be recommended.

Leaving the quays, which remind one of old Dutch towns, many little paved lanes, odorous of fish, lead to the High Street, in one of which an aggressive building—sacred to the Salvationists—threatens the harmless passer-by, in great stone letters, with an eternity of blood and fire. The suburbs—out towards Parkstone—are healthy and breezy, and the high land stretching towards Canford is fringed with rows of wind-bent pines, whose curved, bare, slender stems, and soft, drooping crowns, look like palms in the desert. Owing to the curious action of the tide in the English Channel, there are four high-waters per diem in Poole Harbour, the second, or intermediate one, is called

the Gulder—it is thus that the tide seems to be generally high. At Branksea there is a rise of six and a half feet at springs, and higher up the estuary it is about four feet.

Poole is one of the oldest towns in the kingdom; but its once fine old monastery is converted by the Goths into Customs warehouses, and even stables. There is an efficient life-boat at Poole, snugly ensconced in a neat red-brick edifice on the shore; but why here, so far off, when ships are in danger outside, and not at North Haven Point, does not appear.

Our stay at Poole is never long—like Natty Bumppo, when he got to the borders of civilisation, we find it “too crowded”—so, picking up letters and papers, and generally replenishing the larder, we sail down to Branksea again, and, turning sharp round the Bell buoy, enter the Wych Channel, just scraping the bar, which, at low water, has only five feet upon it. This part of the channel is well boomed up to the pier off Maryland, where we bring up in about sixteen feet, opposite Broad Looe, for the night, in order conveniently to send for letters in the morning, before going on to Shipstall, where posts are unknown. A glance at the chart will show the immense saving of distance, when crossing from Branksea to Poole, by using the Broad Looe. Here and there you find five or six feet of water in the tortuous passage; but elsewhere there may be only two, rendering it practically useless for anything but row-boats. Wonderful collections of bottomless coal-baskets, old watering-pots, and cans, ornament the principal booms in this passage, and, looming large in the darkness, are good guides at night.

Branksea on this side is very lovely, the black firs clothing all the cliff side with dense verdure, and the bailiff's cottage crowning the steep, nestling among a thicket of rhododendrons, makes a most attractive picture; but the ruined pier—falling piece by piece into the mud—and the iron rail with overturned trucks and grass-grown ways, mar the placid face of nature. Still, as the years go on, and heather, bracken, and bramble again embroider their loveliness over the thrown-up works, it may be that, as Lady Verney so beautifully says in “Stone Edge:” “God Almighty's flowers will just cover all the desolate places that man makes waste, and will bloom on and make all fair again.”

Getting under weigh from Maryland soon after the first low water, the deepest water lies close into the pier. The Wych Channel then leaves the island round which it has coasted, and, after a sharp turn, the boom on the right bank being placed rather too far from the real point, a pretty straight course, badly staked, brings us to Shipstall, where, immediately opposite a low green point—on which three cottages belonging to Lord Eldon are picturesquely planted—the Wych Lake takes an elbow-turn sharp round to the left, and when the two chimneys of the inshore cottage are “in one,” our mainsail is lowered, the anchor rattles down from the bows, and we swing at good scope to the tide.

There must once have been considerable traffic between this most charming place and the outer world, judging by the remains of an excellent pier, while a depth of thirty-six feet is found a few feet from it. Nothing now, larger than a pleasure-boat, ever lies there. No one seems to remember what constituted the traffic making such a landing necessary, unless in bygone years, before the railway came to Wareham, the produce of the farms on the Arne peninsula was shipped from here. No Poole clay has ever been brought to Shipstall for embarkation.

When coming up the Wych Channel from Branksea, Arne trees—a dark pine-wood crowning the highest land, one hundred and seventy-eight feet high, and the site of an ancient Roman encampment—form a lovely background to the low point of Shipstall; Lord Eldon's handsome grey stone shooting-lodge lurks under the shadow of the dense fir-wood; Arne church perches on its round, smooth, turf knoll; the school and cottages composing this lovely little hamlet, all built of Purbeck stone, that preserves its clean grey tint undimmed and unstained by lichen or time, nestle under the bracken-covered hill; while to right and left stretches out a thick belt of hemlock, and larch, and Scotch fir, creeping each year, with wind-sown seedlings, further into the sandy heath towards Wareham. When thus sailing up into the heart of the land—past furze and heather islands, great stretches of green-covered mud, reed-islets, and sedgy shores, where there is no landing at any price—this smiling little hamlet is a very oasis in the desert.

To represent the lovely repose of Shipstall, when the tide is high, and the

weather has settled down for many days into absolute calm, would be a splendid subject for a painter. The quiet tide imperceptibly creeps and steals up, without a sound or a ripple against the sandy shore. On early, hot summer mornings, the whole of Wych Lake, for an hour and more, often looks like one vast, unbroken sheet of glass, and reflects in its deep bosom, with marvellous accuracy, the aged grey-brown cottages, warmed and beautified with a deep, sloping, red-tiled roof, delicately embroidered by the passage of years with lichen and stone-crop—brown, orange, red, and grey. The tall, solid, brick chimneys; the open casements; a few scraggy old wind-blown damsons, bent double with the cutting blasts of many a winter night; and the sharp gorse and turf-covered hill behind, with stacks of peat-fuel drying in the summer air; all are doubled so accurately in the quiet lake, that, but for being inverted, one reflection is as clear as the other. A thin vapour of bluish smoke from the nearest chimney shows that a sleeping world is awakening. Morning is the time for artists, the earlier the better, while the shimmering water simmers and palpitates; but one well nigh despairs, before half the picture is secured, of nature remaining in one mood long enough to get all her lovely lights, gleams, and shadows. Then a whispering sigh of wind steals over the placid surface, blotting out with careless, ruffling breath, the sharp reflections, leaving naught behind but a dull, green-grey line, where a gorgeous picture burned but a moment past. Sometimes—happily, for one's half-finished efforts—the little sigh of air, which cruelly ruffles and destroys, dies entirely away, and the limpid water again mirrors the quiet scene. The sweet air of morning steals over the cliff, honey-scented with heather and gorse, even the hum of the bees is heard as they dart into the heather-bells, retiring precipitately if their fellow-workers have been beforehand and the sweets are rifled. The rabbits, sharp against the sky, on the cliff above, look at us with ears erect, but without alarm, and gambol in and out of their holes under the old knotted, grey roots of the furze, and the warm shelter of the great feathery bracken, enjoying the early day before anybody is about. Labour must still go on, however, careless of sorrow or age. Old Chisman standing on the point, apparently seven feet high, shades his fine features with one toil-worn hand, as he

casts a searching and wistful eye to windward, as if trying to pierce the future secrets of the winds and waves, just as the old Deerslayer may have done on the mighty prairies towards the setting sun, then steps carefully into his frail mud-flat, drawing about a couple of inches, and lays his waterproof and son'-wester down at the bottom among the folds of an aged brown sail. He evidently opines that the "gaudy" morning is a weather-breeder, and that his waterproofs will be more serviceable than the sail, when, in the deep evening shadows, he pulls slowly, alone, with his three score years and ten, over the great mud-flats back to his home at Shipstall, where he smokes the pipe of weariness, in the deep, dim, old chimney corner, after steering a hard-mouthed clay-barge from Poole to Middlebere and back several times during the day. His daughter—delicate of aspect, with spotless apron—comes through the white gate, out on to the thick, short, down turf, to liberate and feed her ducks and chickens, surrounded by an attentive audience of the neighbouring babies, each enjoying an enormous hunch of bread and treacle, which is continually in imminent danger from the attacks of the greedy ducks. Their tired father, the fisherman of Shipstall, gaunt and stalwart, in great sea-boots, has come in with morning from a night among the reaches; heavily and wearily he steps out of the flat, giving a fishy hand to each toddler, who comes down and stands, with its nice new boots in the water, to greet "Daddy." "'E ain't got nuthin'," observes our skipper, standing on the forecastle, enjoying his first morning pipe, "the chillen 'll have all they," meaning that the poor man, who has been out of his bed, toiling all night, has caught nothing worth taking to Poole for sale, and that, consequently, we and his own children will consume the scanty fruit of a long night's toil. Fish are very uncertain in the upper reaches—three or four silver bass, a mullet or two, and a few flat-fish being often all that lies at the bottom of the boat, among the green rushes, when the fisherman returns. Yet, sometimes, a fine school of mullet come up with the tide, swimming just underneath the surface, and ruffling the sparkling water with mimic waves. Like a tiny white squall in the tropics, they hurtle past us, with a swishing noise like a heavy shower falling alongside, leaping, jumping, and chasing each other, they pass away into

the upper waters, when, unwarily entering the wide mouth of a blind creek—that is, a creek leading nowhere—they are netted before morning, and the boat returns heavy laden, on its way to Poole. In late autumn, herrings are tolerably plentiful; but, after all, fishing, hereabouts, is a very precarious employment.

LOUIS DRAYCOTT.

BY MRS. R. S. DE COURCY LAFFAN.

Author of "Geoffrey Stirling," etc. etc.

CHAPTER IV. NUNC DIMITTIS.

AFTER the storm comes the calm, so they say; and with us it was a long calm.

After Louis Draycott left us, four years glided by unmarked by any turmoil; quiet, in a way contented, busy always. Such happy ripples on the surface of our lives as a visit from John and Stephen, on leave from their ship; the sight of Glennie, with more assegais and various other trophies, and, best of all, the news that he was to be quartered in England for some time to come; were pleasures indeed.

Then, Dumphie being made a partner in the City house, was truly an event, and surprised no one but himself. Of course, he made another attempt to get us to leave Prospect Place and take up our abode in a more fashionable neighbourhood. But I told him I was like a plant that had taken deep root; and I reminded him that I was getting into years, and that old plants ill bear transplanting, as any gardener knows.

Mazie said but little. She was more silent now than she used to be in the old, merry days, before her life was shorn of its sweetest flowers; and for her the music of happy love ceased to play. But I knew—I knew.

I could see what precious and tender associations she had with this little home treasure and that. I knew that no other rooms could be tenanted with such dear ghosts as those in Prospect Place; and I was glad when Dumphie, shaking himself a little after his fashion when crossed, and yet half pleased, too, that we were so tender over the old home, compromised matters by setting up a brougham for Mazie and myself at the livery stables hard by, and taking us such jaunts to many lands, as called for double postage on our African letters, so greatly did those missives bulge and swell with many pages of descriptive writing.

Surely there never was so brave, so true a heart as Mazie's, or one so beautifully full of thought for others, so empty of thought for herself. And after all it is this spirit that makes life worth the living, that gives it all its sweetness and reality, and lifts it above the mere outward circumstances that are but the husk that holds the kernel.

There was a time when our darling needed to be left alone; needed to "dree her weird" in her own way. As one recovering from mortal sickness needs rest, and quiet, and peace, and loving tenderness, that must be always silent, so was it with the sickness of the heart.

"Give me time, Aunt Dacie," she used to say to me; "only give me time, and you will see. I will not whimper long. I am a very sad and sorry creature now; but it will not last. Bear with me, dear, and I shall be, not quite, perhaps, your old bright Mazie, but something near it. Just now, nothing seems to have any healing in it but solitude and silence. I have not got over expecting to hear his footstep on the stairs; his voice calling for me. Fancy plays me strange tricks sometimes; but it will all pass. I shall find plenty to do before long, as he wished that I should."

And she did.

I cannot say, looking back over the four years that have now gone by, that Mazie has been an unhappy woman, or her life an empty one. One treasure that Louis gave her when he went away has been a thing most precious—a volume over whose dear pages she has pored again and again, over which she has wept and smiled—for the pathetic and the humorous mingle in it—the narrative told, day by day, in Louis Draycott's diary. It is the story of his heart, the story of his love, the story of his sorrows, of his work, his hopes and fears.

"It always seems to me, Aunt Dacie, like having part of himself, having that book to go to. I can read between the lines you see. I can read the story of how he grew to love me, of the priceless gift he gave me—his noble, tender heart. I feel as if he was talking to me when I read what his dear hand has traced here—and see! Do you remember how fond he was of golden flowers? Look at these amber heartsease where I have put them—'faded yellow blossoms 'twixt page and page, to mark great places with due gratitude'—to mark just the lines that ring the sweetest as I read them."

Thus would Mazie speak to me when she and I sat alone in the gloaming. I hadn't much to say in reply. I never have possessed the gift of eloquence; but she knew what was in my heart—the love and the pity, and the never-failing sympathy.

Though her life was saturated through and through with the spirit of the words that Louis taught her, though "*Fiat voluntas tua*" came not only from her lips, but from her heart, Mazie, in these days, was greatly changed. Her young, fresh beauty was gone. She looked more like a woman of thirty, than one not far on in the twenties. Her face was sweet and gentle, but some of the light had died out of it. Her voice, "soft and low," as it had ever been, had now a ring of sadness; the silvery laugh that had been the music of our home, did not come so readily. One part of her life was like a musical instrument, flaccid and unstrung; there was no hand near to whose touch it could vibrate.

Mazie had had that half-fearful, that divine glimpse of the passionate possibility of life that must leave its mark upon a woman's heart. She had climbed the heights of Pisgah and gazed upon a fair and promised land, yet never entered upon it. Hence all the melody of her life was attuned to a minor key, through which trembled the thrill of unsatisfied longing.

Yet the minor chord has a sweetness all its own; and so had the music of my darling's life and thoughts. To the casual beholder, her beauty had lost its brightness; no one would turn to look at her as she passed. But when she spoke to you, the soul in her eyes won you and drew you, the smile on her lips seemed a light on your path, the clasp of her hand a true help and stay. Especially were little children drawn to her, and she to them. The touch of their tiny hands seemed to have, for her, some power of comfort and of healing; their artless prattle oftenest brought a smile to the lips that had taken such grave, sad lines since Louis Draycott left us. Were they to her like Elia's dream-children to him? Did they take the guise of the little ones that might have clustered at her knee, and called her "Mother;" but that now might never be?

I could not tell. But I could see that she was at her brightest and happiest when surrounded by them; I could see that her work of love among the children of the poor was very dear to her.

Louis's letters were our great delight, and we really seemed to know as much about his work out there as he did himself. I once saw, in a book he had given to Mazie, the following words underlined: "*Sympathy is the soul of life.*" This then, being so, Louis Draycott's life was not a soulless thing, for, though the sympathy came from very far away—it was true and quick, and never-failing.

Twice in the year Mazie used to go away for a whole long day. She always went alone, and came back looking very tired, and grave, and sad.

The day after this journey of hers she would write a long, long letter to Louis; and I knew she was telling him all about his wife. I was never one to ask many questions, so I did not question Mazie; but, little by little, of her own free will, she would tell me of Rebecca: of the restless spirit that still chafed and girded against captivity; of the unconquerable hatred of bondage, that made that bondage all the harder to bear; of other women who, reconciled to their fate, were patient under it; or, as the Principal of the women's side of the prison said: "Made the best of things, and gave no trouble."

Alas! very different to this was the record of Rebecca Fordyce Draycott.

"She is wearing herself out," said Mazie to me. "You would hardly know her; she is grown so gaunt and thin, and she has a cough which shakes her terribly. Twice, when I have been allowed to visit her, I have learnt that she has been in the wrist-irons, and they say she is ever so much better after I have been to see her. For a time she remembers all the promises she has made to me, but then she forgets and turns stubborn again. I wish I could go to see her oftener. I wish I could get nearer to her when I do go; but the rules are more strict after a prisoner is convicted, and the authorities must be just and fair to all. Her eyes have such a strange look, Aunt Dacie; they are like the eyes of some wild animal that is snared and caught. She will stretch out her hands to me, and moan so, that it breaks one's heart to hear. I must not tell Louis all the worst of it."

This was what Mazie said to me some time after Rebecca had left Millbank prison, and I saw she was very unhappy. Nor yet did she recover herself in between one visit to the prison and another. The thought of that poor caged creature hung over her like a cloud.

"I feel so helpless," she said to me one night; "they are all very kind down there, but they can do nothing either. I reminded Rebecca that there were only a few months to live through now, and that then I should take her away and take care of her, and help her, and she should go and live somewhere in the country among the green lanes and fields."

"Well?" said I, looking up over my spectacles, "and what did she say to that?"

"Cried out that she could not bear it; that all she wanted was to be free—free—free; and then she threw her arms about wildly, moaning pitifully. Oh, Aunt Dacie, it was terrible! They were obliged to speak harshly to her, and I—I didn't know what I did. At last I told her that if she was so unruly I would not come to see her again, and she cried out, 'Don't say that, don't say that! Anything but that!' and the tears ran and coursed down her cheeks."

I must not forget to say that neither Mazie nor myself had lost sight of our friends at the prison, where Louis's work once lay. Many changes had taken place there. In fact, Bessy was now Mrs. George Bramble, and we had several times partaken of tea in the gate-house, in company with George, his wife, Tottie, and Bobby, and Joseph Stubbs, the whole forming a most united and happy family. When I heard of the marriage I was very glad, for I thought Bessy deserved to have some bright days after all she had suffered, and I also thought that Bobby began to require a stronger hand over him than hers was likely to be. I went down to offer my congratulations in person, and found only George, jangling as usual and crusted over with keys, but radiantly happy, and spruced up visibly as to his attire.

"I served for Betsy, ma'am," said he, toying with a great key attached to his girdle by a mighty chain, with a sort of elephantine coyness, "same as Jacob served for Rachel. But I didn't get the time to go by so slape as he did, by all accounts; and I thought she wur never a-goin' to mak' up her moind. So at last I says to her, says I: 'It's this way, Betsy, you can tak' me now, at onct, or you can leave me. I've bin' singin' t' same song over and over agen, same as a cheepin' guinea-hen for all t'-world, and I arn't a-goin' to sing it no more, for it fair chokes me.' So at that she ups and says as she knows

I'll allers be kind to Bobby. She sort'er give the varmint to me in a gift, did Betsy, hersel' included; and that very night the boy he clomb on my knee, and clipt me round the neck, and, 'George,' says he, 'you're to be my new daddy; Miss Johnstone says so. She said you'd oughter be ashamed to tak' a woman as had rode on a baggage-waggon. Did mammy and me ride on a baggage-waggon, Bramble?' says he. 'That did yo,' says I; 'and many a bonny ride you had, too, I'll go bail, and now you're a-goin' to live along o' me, and you can look at these here picters Sundays and week-days, too, if yo've a moind—yo' and t' little wench. And mind you're good to her, and don't go tyin' her hair i' knots, same as I saw yo' last Saturday was a week.' 'An' Joseph Stubbs 'ull be my cat,' said the crittur, seemin' not to let on he heard what I said about t' lassie's curls, 'and I can beat him when he's bad.' 'Yo'll find two can play at that game, Bobby, if you cut too many of your capers here, my boy,' for I thought I'd best speak a bit sharp, you see, Miss Dacie, 'count o' him bein' so uppish-like, as they say."

It must not be supposed that the ex-chaplain was forgotten at the prison; indeed, his name was still often on the lips of those who then had known and loved him; and I often thought that his successor was not a man to be envied. It must have been trying enough to know you were always being measured by such a standard.

I noticed that, as the time for again visiting Rebecca drew near, Mazie grew restless and anxious. She did not say much, nor did I; but I felt that it would be a relief to her when the day came, and I said so to Dumphie.

"These visits to the prison try her greatly," he answered. "She looked thoroughly over-wrought when she came home last time. But I do not see that one can do anything. She is a noble creature, is our Mazie, and she must dree her weird to the end; what that may be rests with God, and we can only leave her in His loving hands."

Next day Mazie started alone, as she had always done. Once, in the early days after Louis left us, I had offered to go with her. Once Dumphie had done the same; but, quietly and lovingly, she, as it were, put us both aside.

"I would rather go alone," she said, and so we let her have her way.

But this time evening drew in, the lamps were lighted in the street outside, Kezia brought in the reading-lamp, Dumphie came in from the City, and yet there was no Mazie.

"What shall we do?" we said.

Just then a telegraph boy came sauntering in a leisurely manner—as they always do—up the steps. Dumphie was at the door in a trice, and had torn open the yellow envelope.

"Let Aunt Dacie come to me in the morning. I am staying here all night. Rebecca is dying. You will know I cannot leave her."

We looked wildly into each other's face. Thought ran riot in both our hearts, but our tongues seemed tied. We dare not say what Mazie would have resented had she been there.

We sat through tea almost in silence. Afterwards, I played little bits of Mozart and Handel—things that Dumphie loved—while he sat by the fire, not reading, as I saw, but dreamily watching the glow. Somehow, last of all, I drifted into the air of a German song Mazie had often sung before Louis left us, but never sang more.

When I had played through the melody I let my hands drop a moment on my lap, and a mist of tears came before my eyes.

I have quite given up being surprised at anything I do. I look back upon the years of my former life as to a sort of chrysalis state; for, since then, I have hatched myself an elderly and venturesome butterfly, and thought no more of packing my things and starting off on all manner of journeys than I used to think of going down into the kitchen and ordering dinner. So, next day, I got ready soon after breakfast and set off to join Mazie. She had always liked to go alone before; but now some crisis was at hand, and she felt the need of having Aunt Dacie by her.

My railway journey over, I reached the prison and was shown into a little dreary-looking room, with close-barred windows, and only a form by way of resting-place. The gatekeeper was not at all like George Bramble, and, I fancied, looked at me suspiciously. The place altogether had a cold, bleak look, and I squeezed my hands together tightly as I waited.

Presently a gate, at the other end of the arched way, into which the dreary little room looked, was unlocked, and, ushered in by the gatekeeper, the surgeon of the prison presented himself to me. I must

say I was somewhat mollified by his genial, sympathetic manner, and soon found myself walking by his side along a long prison block, upon which many barred and grated windows and stanchioned loopholes had their outlook, if such a very limited view as they must have allowed of can be called an outlook at all.

The surgeon gave me some particulars of poor Rebecca's case as we went along. She was far gone in rapid consumption, in fact, death wasn't far off. The young lady—Miss Birt, was it not?—who had visited her so regularly, had been greatly distressed to find her in such extremity. She had pleaded hard to be allowed to take number 479 outside, to get her into a hospital, and thus permit her to feel she could die free. They sometimes had these cases, and rules were never very rigorously enforced when all hope of recovery was past. All the prison authorities insisted upon was that positive assurance should be given that the dying prisoner should be well tended and cared for. All along this poor woman, number 479, had fretted dreadfully, and shown a deep loathing of her bondage. Miss Birt's notion was therefore perfectly to be accounted for; but, strange to say, the patient had expressed a wish to remain where she was. The young lady had been allowed to stay with her till late at night. The surgeon did not think she had let go her hand once. He really must be allowed to express his admiration of the said young lady in the capacity of sick-nurse. It was a gift, and in his opinion ought to be utilised. He should be glad to know that the young lady in question had some aspirations towards hospital life.

To this I made no answer. My heart was too full. Besides—the atmosphere of the place oppressed me. Door after door was unlocked for us to pass through. Tier upon tier the cells mounted up, all as much alike as beads on a string. Once we caught sight of a number of women in white caps and grey gowns, walking round and round in an open space.

"Daily exercise," said the surgeon, with a wave of the hand. From the end of a long passage closed by an iron-clamped door came the far-off sound of hymn-singing.

"Practising in the chapel," said the surgeon, in the same laconic fashion.

More wardresses; more rattling and jangling of keys; more doors; and then—!

The remote corner of an infirmary ward, a narrow bed, a death-white face, an outstretched form—some one—Mazie—kneeling by the cot, holding the long, emaciated hand. From high in the wall above, the light from a barred window fell full upon the dark, sunken eyes, the fallen cheeks, the livid lips of the dying woman, and catching the gleam of Mazie's hair as she knelt, turned it to gold.

Death was very near, as we could see—so near that my precious darling did not rise as I came in, only lifted her dear head as I came round, and smiled for a moment.

Rebecca took no notice of me, or of any one. She had only eyes for one face—only for Mazie.

The surgeon made a gesture with his hand, and turned away. His part in the pitiful drama was played. There was nothing more for him to do.

They set a chair for me, these quiet, grave-eyed women standing by, whose duty it was to tend the sick prisoners. But I did not take it; I knelt at the foot of the bed, and covered my face with my hands.

Presently Rebecca spoke, haltingly and feebly, as indeed it was all her laboured breathing permitted of.

"You will tell Louis how I thought of it all—the shame and the sin, and the sorrow I made for him?"

"Yes, yes, dear, I have promised you that. I shall not forget."

How calm was Mazie! How lifted up out and beyond all thought or consciousness of herself. I listened in amaze.

"You know that Louis has forgiven you long since."

"Has forgiven me—long—since!"

Rebecca smiled faintly as she echoed Mazie's words. Then there was silence for a while, broken only by the sound of the laboured breathing that grew rapidly shorter and shorter.

"Do not let go my hand. It is growing dark, so dark. There is light there—you said so."

The sun still shone brightly on the face where the grey hues of death were gathering, and on Mazie's bowed head; but the eyes could not see.

"Yes, yes," said Mazie, sobbing, "you know what he said: 'I am the Light of the world.' Oh, what a beautiful name

that is! the Light—the Light of the world."

My darling had the dying head upon her breast as she spoke; her arms upheld the dying form.

"I knew your face was like the—angel in—in the—picture—at home. I cannot see it any more; but I know it is like that still. I know you came—to—set—me—free—free!"

Rebecca put up her hand to touch Mazie's cheek; touched it gently, tenderly, lovingly; and then the hand fell with a dull thud upon the coverlet.

Her bonds were struck off; the prisoner was free.

I have but a few last words to say.

Louis is on his way home. I am glad that the poplar tree is just budding out into lovely pale-green tufts of leaves, and will be looking its best when he reaches us.

As to the Virginian creeper, he will hardly know it. It has gone quite round the dormer window, and is coming down the other side.

Glennie is with us "on leave." Such a bright, bonnie fellow, and as droll and full of fun as ever. He will say that he thinks everything is "quite perzackly."

But he does not say so before Mazie. We are all afraid of Mazie in these days. She is very still and silent, and loves to be by herself.

In her eyes is the look of one who watches the sea for the coming of a ship.

Once only has she spoken to me of what is in her heart.

"Aunt Dacie," she said, "the years have not been all weary; there has been too much to do in them; but no one knows how I have missed him, or how I have longed for him; how much—how much! It was so dear and close; it was such a precious time, and now, when I see him face to face, when I hear his voice and feel his arms about me, oh, dear Aunt Dacie, do you think that I shall die of the joy of it?"

Then she flung herself upon my breast weeping, and I wept too; but our tears were tears of joy.

THE END.

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